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The Importance of Teachers' Intercultural Competence for Teaching English in an EFL Classroom

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Resumen:

Esta síntesis de investigación se desarrolló con la finalidad de analizar la influencia de la Competencia Intercultural en aulas con enfoque en inglés como Lengua Extranjera. Además, esta investigación está centrada en profesores como participantes de la investigación donde sus creencias y prácticas fueron analizadas en 20 estudios empíricos. Dichos estudios fueron seleccionados tomando en cuenta algunos criterios, sólo estudios con enfoque en Competencia Intercultural, artículos en los cuales los participantes pertenecen a aulas con enfoque en inglés como Lengua Extranjera y lo más importante, estudios que hayan sido publicados en los últimos 20 años. El análisis se desarrolló mediante el uso de una investigación exploratoria cuyos resultados mostraron que los profesores a pesar de tener conocimiento mínimo sobre la Competencia Intercultural, tienen creencias y percepciones y favorables sobre la importancia de implementar la Competencia Intercultural en aulas donde el inglés se estudia como una lengua extranjera.

Palabras claves: Competencia Intercultural. Profesores. Percepciones. Inglés como lengua extranjera. Revisión de la literatura. Prácticas.



Abstract:

This research synthesis was developed to analyze the influence of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms. In addition, it is centered on teachers as the participants of the research were their beliefs and practices were analyzed in 20 empirical studies. The studies were selected taking into account some criteria, only the studies focused on Intercultural Competence, articles whose participants belong to EFL classrooms, and the most important, studies that were published within the last 20 years. The analysis was developed through the use of an exploratory research in which the results showed that teachers have minimal knowledge of Intercultural Competence and how to implement it in their EFL classes. However, they have positive attitudes and beliefs towards the implementation of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms.

Keywords: Intercultural Competence. Teachers. Perceptions. English as a Foreign Language. Literature Review. Practices.



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- *Lourdes Brito*



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- *Dayanna Castro*



Dedication

To my mom and dad because all I got is thanks to your support and love.

Lourdes Brito



Dedication

This project is passionately dedicated to my beloved parents, Angelita and Galo, who have encouraged me all the way and whose thought me that each step, even if it is a little one, will make me a better human being. To my little sister; Damaris who gave me one more reason to continue with my life, dreams and goals. Thank you for your everlasting love and warm encouragement throughout my life. Without you, I couldn't overcome my difficulties and concentrate on my studies. To you that despite everything, you have been by my side supporting me in each decision I make. Lastly, to my family and friends for encouraging and believing in me.

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Introduction

The present research synthesis was conducted with the purpose to analyze the importance of teachers' Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms. The investigation was focused on the topic of Intercultural Competence because “Intercultural Competence has become a central issue in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) over the last two decades.” (Gomez, 2012, p.50). Byram (2002) claims that intercultural competence is an essential skill for language teaching professionals. Consequently, authors such as Israelsson, 2016; Clouet 2012; Alvarez and Gonzalez, 2017; and Bektas-Cetinkaya and Celik; 2013, conducted studies to investigate the role of Intercultural competence in EFL classrooms to show the interrelationship of language and culture in learning/teaching English in a multicultural society. Similarly, the implementation of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms shows that teachers’ beliefs towards Intercultural Competence are favorable and give them positive results in their classes (Holguín, 2013: Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, & Kaslioglu, 2009; Young & Sachdev, 2011; Eken, 2015; and Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018).

Nowadays, Intercultural Competence plays a vital role in teaching English because it is used worldwide by millions of people. Several studies have shown that teachers focus on the English language as a linguistic competence instead of focusing on other aspects of language teaching such as Intercultural Competence.

Furthermore, this research synthesis focused on teachers as the study participants, and 20 studies were considered for the analysis. In addition, teachers’ beliefs and practices were analyzed regarding the integration of Intercultural Competence in foreign language classrooms. Moreover, the development of the research synthesis was centered on the main objective that considered the importance of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms and the influence of



teachers' experiences in language teaching to analyze their perceptions and attitudes towards Intercultural Competence and the practices they perform in their EFL classrooms.

Finally, this research synthesis was divided into six chapters. First, the description of the research where the background, statement of the problem, rationale, questions, and objectives were included. Then, the theoretical framework in regards to the most important definitions and concepts of terms such as culture, competence, Intercultural Competence were defined. In the same way, the existing theories and studies respecting Intercultural Competence were described in the next chapter. Besides, the methodology and the analysis of the data were added in two different chapters to finally conclude this synthesis of investigation with the results of the analysis in the chapter of Conclusions and Recommendations.



Chapter I

1. Description of the Research

1.1. Background

Globalization has changed the world's perception, and as UNESCO (2013) stated, cultural boundaries are changing, so the rate of social change is rising. Besides, UNESCO (2009) mentioned that such transformations resulted in cultural assortment, and intercultural communication has become the reality of modern life, so Intercultural Competence becomes a requisite response. Luis Gomez (2012) defined intercultural communicative competence as "the ability to cope with one's own cultural background in interaction with others." (p. 51).

Similarly, Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009) described Intercultural Competence as "the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world" (p.7)

According to Alvino Fantini and Aqeel Tirmizi (2006), there is an extensive range of terms that helps to illustrate, discuss and describe Intercultural Competence, including cross-cultural awareness, global competitive intelligence, cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, ethnic-relativity, international competence, intercultural interaction, biculturalism, and multiculturalism. The use of different terms to address Intercultural Competence suggests that Intercultural Competence has been studied spontaneously due to the difficulties in communication among people from different cultures. As described by Sinicrope, Norries, and Watanable (2007), the main areas of concern focused on Intercultural Competence motivated by



perceived cross-cultural communication problems hampered collaboration between individuals from different backgrounds.

Currently, Intercultural Competence research has expanded due to the immersion of people in different cultures by studying abroad, having international businesses cross-cultural training, immigrant acculturation, along with others (Sinicrope, Norries, and Watanable, 2007). On account of this, Gomez (2012, p.50) stated that "the development of intercultural communicative competence has become a central issue in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) over the last two decades."

Besides, Bachman (1995) claimed that the contemporary models of communicative competence reveal that Intercultural Competence involves learning a language and the elements related to cultural knowledge and awareness. Learning a language consists of knowing the rules to apply grammatically and the fundamental factors involved in it, the cultural content.

Likewise, Young and Sercomber (2010) stated that Intercultural Competence is a dynamic process by which people build on and use the culture familiar to them and the culture of those with whom they have interaction. Therefore, according to Bertha Ramos (2013), teachers are requested to help students value their cultural differences and practices as members of a community. However, although teachers know the aspects of the target culture, they do not know how to deal with it. (Gonen and Saglam, 2012).

In other words, dealing with the target culture is difficult because teachers are not given opportunities to be engaged in it, which results in a complication for them. It is supported by Barletta (2009), who stated that "the concept of intercultural competence requires relevant



knowledge, skills, and attitudes for intercultural encounters for which most teachers may not be prepared." (p. 145)

Furthermore, it is essential to consider Intercultural Competence as a topic for research. Young and Sachdev (2009) stated there is a growing recognition of its importance and relevance; however, the integration and application of intercultural communicative competence to classroom practice has been the issue of little empirical research, particularly regarding English teaching.

1.2. Statement of the problem

According to Helena Brdarić (2016), "teaching culture should be an essential part of teaching English as a foreign language because one of its main aims is intercultural communicative competence (ICC), which refers to knowledge of social groups and their practices and customs" (p.1). Besides, as indicated by Kramsch (2001), the main goal of learning a foreign language should be to have the ability to communicate effectively and the search for the understanding of cultural limits and the attempt to reach an agreement with those limits.

Likewise, Paloma Castro (1999) mentioned that in the current time, teachers have to teach the foreign language in terms of its grammar and syntax and contextualize those aspects against the socio-cultural background associated with the foreign language to promote the acquisition of Intercultural Communicative Competence. However, conferring with some researchers, teachers conveyed positive perceptions about the role of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms. Still, they do not integrate culture-related practices in their classes. (Nemati, Marzban & Maleki, 2014. p. 132).



Moreover, Gomez (2012) mentioned that teachers nowadays are becoming aware that language teaching is to permit students to communicate effectively with people who have different cultural backgrounds. Nonetheless, Lázár (2003) points out that despite the Common European Framework of Reference to Languages (CEF) recommendations, the focus of teaching a foreign language is still on the study of grammatical and lexical components of a language. Correspondingly, Haneda (2007) also explains that Intercultural Competence has been disregarded in EFL classrooms because language teaching has been influenced just by the study of grammatical forms.

Therefore, to respond to this problem, this study aims to investigate the importance and emphasis teachers put on Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms by analyzing their perceptions, beliefs, and practices. The significance of this study is supported by Gomez (2018), who argued that more work needs to be done to ensure that the teaching is not only focused on grammar learning but also on Intercultural Communication development.

1.3. Rationale

There are various students with different cultures in a classroom, consequently customs, since educational institutions have increasingly welcomed students from other countries. Nonetheless, there is a cultural clash between local and international students while learning a new language. Perhaps, this lack of Intercultural Competence in students, as Atay et al. (2009) stated, is because teachers seemed to not know how to incorporate culture and do not have the opportunity to integrate it in their EFL classrooms.

In a classroom, as Furstenberg Gilberte (2010) stated, the teacher's goal is to help build a pleasant environment for their students through the knowledge of intercultural competence that



involves different aspects of their cultures. Besides, Fakirska (2010) mentioned that in intercultural education, individuals from different cultural backgrounds could work together, respect each other, become familiar with the other traditions, regardless of whether she/he is a minority or not. For instance, Hongtao (2013) found that teachers improve students' cultural competence through their expeditions and exchange projects.

Azadeh Nemati, Amir Marzban, and Ensieh Maleki (2014) found out that for teachers, the most relevant purposes of foreign language teaching are helping students use English for practical reasons, motivating them to learn, and assisting students to gain knowledge and skills for life.

Furthermore, Räsänen (2007, p. 28) stated that "intercultural learning and competence can be seen as important dimensions in the area of intercultural education, which, at the same time, have often been seen as one sub-area of global education." Teachers should offer a more globalized education through each country's strengths or ethnic group, and those aspects have to be valued by everyone without any discrimination. Moreover, they should emphasize recognizing the personal right of each student to receive a differentiated education that supports and promotes their identity.

Based on what has been presented in this section, analyzing the experiences and situations shown in English as a Foreign Language classroom, it is vital to consider that teachers' Intercultural Competence is essential for an EFL classroom.

1.4. Research Questions

After analyzing the relevant literature for this synthesis, the following questions have arisen:

1. What are teachers' beliefs of Intercultural Competence in EFL teaching?



2. What are teachers' practices in relation to Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms?
3. To what extent does the development of Intercultural Competence enhance teachers' language teaching?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1. General objective:

To report the importance of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms to analyze the influence of teachers' experiences in language teaching through analyzing empirical studies.

1.5.2. Specific objectives:

To analyze teachers' beliefs of Intercultural Competence in an EFL classroom.

To analyze the practices of teachers' intercultural competence in EFL classrooms.

To analyze to what extent the development of Intercultural Competence enhances teachers' language teaching.



CHAPTER II

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Introduction

In this part, some theories that connect to the study will be discussed. The section starts with the definition of culture, competence, and Intercultural Competence, following concepts to analyze the different components of Intercultural Competence to conclude with some conceptions of attitudes.

2.2. Culture

Culture is a notoriously difficult term to define; therefore, it will be reviewed by different authors and their conceptions through time in this section. According to Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952), culture is a pattern of behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols. Its essential part consists of traditional ideas and values, which are the products of action and the conditional elements of future activity. Moreover, UNESCO (2001) defines culture as a set of spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features of a social group that determined how to be a member of that group. It can include art, literature, lifestyle, values, traditions, and beliefs. An early definition of culture is presented by Spencer-Oatey (2008), in which culture is a fuzzy set of ideas and values, courses of life, beliefs, policies procedures, and behavioral conventions shared by a group of people. They influence their behavior and their interpretation of other people's behavior.

2.3. Competence

Since there are several different ways of thinking about competence, how competence is conceived will be seen in this part. Hager and Gonczi (1996) refer to competence as having "knowledge of appropriate sorts, skills, and abilities such as problem-solving, analysis,

communication, pattern recognition, etc. and attitudes of appropriate kinds" (p. 15). Similarly, UNESCO (2013) defines competence as having the appropriate skill, ability, knowledge, or training to permit proper behavior, whether words or actions, in a particular context. It includes cognitive, functional, personal, and ethical components. Besides, Tinoca, Pereira, and Oliveira (2014) have defined competence as the ability to respond to society's demands by interacting in educational and professional contexts. It requires going beyond the actual knowledge.

2.4. Intercultural Competence

For appropriate communication or interaction with people from other cultures, Intercultural Competence is necessary. According to Young and Sercomber (2010), Intercultural Competence is a dynamic process by which people build on and use the culture familiar to them and the culture of those with whom they have interaction. Likewise, Bachman (1995) claimed that Intercultural Competence involves learning a language and the elements related to cultural knowledge and awareness. Learning a language involves not only knowing the rules to apply grammatically, but the factors involved in it, the cultural content. Moreover, Intercultural Competence is "the ability of a person to behave adequately in a flexible manner when confronted with actions, attitudes, and expectations of representatives of foreign cultures" (Meyer, 1991, p. 138). It is supported by Barletta (2009), who stated that Intercultural Competence includes relevant knowledge, skills, and attitudes for intercultural meetings. Therefore, according to Räsänen (2007), Intercultural Competence can be seen as an essential dimension in intercultural education.

2.5. Components of Intercultural Competence

Throughout time, different authors have developed various components of Intercultural Competence. Thus, according to Byram (2002), Intercultural Competence consists of three main

components that are involved on it, knowledge, skills, and attitudes complemented by five values: (1) intercultural attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) critical cultural awareness. (Table 1)

Table 1
Byram's components of IC

| Component | | Definition |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--|
| Knowledge | | Knowing the system of cultural references of social groups (their products and practices) in one's own culture and other cultures, and knowing about social and individual interactions. |
| Attitude | | Having the affective capacity to overcome ethnocentrism and the cognitive capacity to establish and maintain a relationship between one's own culture and others. |
| Skills | Interpreting and relating | The ability to interpret a document or event in other culture, explain it and relate it to one's own culture. |
| | Discovering and interacting | The ability to create an interpretative system of the meanings, beliefs, and cultural practices that we get to know, coming from unknown cultures or not. |
| | Critical cultural awareness | The ability to evaluate critically perspectives, practices and products of one's own culture and other cultures on the basis of explicit criteria. |

As cited in Alonso-Belmonte and Fernandez-Aguero, 2013, p. 191

Similarly, Deardorff (2012) incorporated a list of different elements considered necessary in the development of Intercultural Competence. Those components included (1) requisite attitudes, (2) Knowledge and comprehension, (3) skills, (4) desired internal outcome, and (5) desired external outcome (Table 2).

Table 2
Deardorff's elements of Intercultural Competence

| Element of Intercultural Competence | Indicators |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. (1) Requisite attitudes | (i) Respect (valuing other cultures, cultural diversity) (ii) Openness (to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, withholding judgment) (iii) Curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty) |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (2) Knowledge and comprehension | (i) Cultural self-awareness, deep understanding, and knowledge of culture (including contexts, role, and impact of culture and others' world views) (ii) Culture-specific information (iii) Sociolinguistic awareness |
| (3) Skills | (i) To listen, observe, and interpret (ii) To analyse, evaluate, and relate |
| (4) Desired internal outcome | Informed frame of reference/filter shift: (i) Adaptability (to difference communication styles and behaviors; adjustment to new cultural environments) (ii) Flexibility (selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility) (iii) Ethnorelative view (iv) Empathy |
| (5) Desired external outcome | Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one's goals to some degrees. |

As cited in Spooner-Lane et al., 2012, p.3

Although Deardorff and Byram have different perspectives towards Intercultural Competence, three components are essential for both authors, attitudes, knowledge, and skills. According to Deardorff (2012), respect, openness, cultural curiosity, and discovery should be considered the underlying Intercultural Competence attitudes. Given this, the Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defined "attitude" as a feeling or opinion about something or someone or a way of behaving that is caused by this. Moreover, Stiftung (2006) stated that attitudes are essential for Intercultural Competence and are forwarded towards tolerance and valuing cultural diversity. One of the goals of Intercultural Competence is to form fundamentally positive attitudes towards other cultures and people. Additionally, the inclusion of attitudes in the Intercultural Competence models has been approached differently. Some researchers label this as intercultural awareness, and others as sensitivity and attitudes (Vogt 2006).

Another essential element of Intercultural Competence is knowledge. According to Webster's Dictionary, knowledge is "the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through experience or association." Additionally, knowledge towards Intercultural



Competence allows people to know the cultural references of a social group within one's own culture and other cultures and understand social and individual experiences. (Byram, 2002).

Finally, essential elements in Intercultural Competence are the skills. Ilie (2009) stated that skills involved vital abilities such as observing, analyzing, and interpreting data for processing the acquired knowledge and critical self-reflection, which is essential to the development of Intercultural Competence. Hence, The Cambridge Dictionary (2020) defined "skills" as a particular ability that you develop through training and experience, which is useful for doing an activity.

Additionally, skills, as a component in a diversity of cultures contain appropriate and effective perceived behaviors. The skill component includes critical skills such as a team member's ability to understand and communicate goals, roles, and norms clearly to other team members (Matveev and Milter 2004).

There are plenty of perceptions of how people see Intercultural Competence, so what we want to emphasize is the importance of this term in language teaching matters. Therefore, it is considered essential to define those terms first to address a general background of Intercultural Competence. Second, its components or elements will help teachers know how to interact or teach in English as Foreign Language classrooms.



CHAPTER III

3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This chapter serves the purpose of summarizing the existing literature that will be useful in the present research synthesis. Many investigations have been proposed to explain the importance of Intercultural Competence in EFL education. However, the current investigation is centered on teachers' relevance" Intercultural Competence in the EFL field. Therefore, the studies have been categorized into the role of culture in EFL teaching, a brief description of the development of Intercultural Competence in EFL teaching, 'teachers' and awareness of Intercultural Competence, and 'teachers' practices regarding Intercultural Competence.

3.2. The Role of Culture in EFL Teaching

"Teachers' understanding of the concept of Intercultural Competence might be a consequence of their general view on culture in language teaching." (Israelsson, 2016). Therefore, Clouet (2012) conducted a study to investigate the role of culture in teaching foreign languages and particularly the interrelationship of language and culture in learning/teaching English as a foreign language in an increasingly multi-cultural society. Twenty teachers participated in the study by answering a questionnaire where the finding revealed that teachers generally prioritize language teaching objectives over culture teaching objectives. They still define culture teaching more in terms of passing on knowledge than providing intercultural skills.

Another study conducted by Israelsson (2016) to know how teachers of English in upper secondary schools in Sweden view culture in English language teaching showed that teachers lack the theoretical background and central guidance with regards to Intercultural Competence (IC). Therefore, language and culture are not integrated into an intercultural model of the English language pedagogy.

Moreover, Alvarez and Gonzalez (2017) conducted an exploratory study of the development of intercultural competence in elementary school teachers in Catalonia, Spain. Through enrollment in a teacher training activity, the starting point was administering a test to assess Intercultural Competence. The findings indicated that, regardless of the presence of foreign origin students at schools, participant teachers overestimate their level of intercultural sensitivity; there is a tendency to emphasize similarities in all cultures, minimizing significant cultural differences.

3.3. Developing Intercultural Competence in EFL Classrooms

Bektas-Cetinkaya and Celik (2013) conducted a study whose aim was to develop the Intercultural Competence of pre-service foreign language teachers in Turkey's classroom context. This study indicated that, in a classroom setting, it is possible to develop pre-service 'teachers' Intercultural Competence through systematic instruction in teacher education departments in the absence of study abroad experience. Similarly, Genç (2018) conducted a study to examine the relationship between certain personal factors such as age, gender, year of study, and pre-service teachers' overseas experience. Through a questionnaire consisting of two parts that investigated the background of 145 prospective teachers in Turkey, half of pre-service EFL teachers had low intercultural communication competence. In sum, apart from the fact that education is one way

for developing Intercultural Competence, the results of this research showed that an overseas experience is essential. Interaction and contacts among people from different cultural backgrounds help to create Intercultural Competence skills.

3.4. 'Teachers' beliefs and perceptions of Intercultural Competence

In today's classrooms, the development of Intercultural Competence is the primary purpose of foreign language teaching. (Holguín, 2013). Hence, Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin, and Kaslioglu (2009) conducted a qualitative study to analyze the opinions and attitudes of 503 Turkish English teachers. Through a questionnaire, findings revealed that teachers seem to be aware of Intercultural Competence in foreign language education. Likewise, in a mix-method research study, Young and Sachdev (2011) found that teachers acknowledged that integrating Intercultural Competence may be successful and appropriate in EFL classrooms.

Moreover, Eken (2015) conducted a research study to know EFL teachers' opinions regarding this issue. The results which were gathered by interviews show that EFL teachers are knowledgeable about Intercultural Competence. Similarly, Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018) conducted a study to provide an insight into the beliefs of 20 Iranian language teachers on intercultural language teaching (ICLT). Based on a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, the findings revealed that teachers were favorably disposed toward Intercultural Competence and thought that culture teaching is as significant as language teaching. Besides, in a study managed by Sercu (2006), the findings revealed that a considerable part of the teachers who participated in the study were willing to teach intercultural competence in their classrooms.

Besides, Demircioğlu and Çakır (2015) found intercultural language teaching fundamental for today's globalized world through an online research survey. Respondent



teachers thought that foreign language teaching should involve intercultural communicative competence (ICC).

Moreover, Hongtao (2013) conducted a qualitative case study to explore the beliefs and reported practices regarding global awareness of 17 EFL teachers in China. The data collection method was in-depth interviews and focus groups from which the findings revealed that teachers know the importance of Intercultural Competence. Also, teachers' beliefs toward Intercultural Competence are favorable. This is evidenced in the study guided by Chau and Truong (2019), which aimed to determine the integration of intercultural education into English teaching. This study's participants were 101 upper secondary school EFL teachers, in which data were collected through questionnaires and open-ended questions. Results revealed teachers understood intercultural integration, but they rarely conducted intercultural activities in their practices.

Bektas-Cetinkaya and Celik (2014) performed the study aimed to explore foreign language teachers' perceptions about Intercultural Competence in a classroom context in Turkey. This study was already presented in one of the previous sections; however, it is included here because results demonstrated that even though teachers had positive perceptions of Intercultural Competence, they had limited knowledge of interacting with foreigners. This means that they do not know what to expect in intercultural encounters and how to break down conversations. Cultural content has significant effects on intercultural skills and intercultural awareness. However, there is no significant attitudinal change in pre-service teachers in the study's context.

The study carried out by Bouslama and Benaissi (2018) showed that teachers' perceptions of Intercultural Competence concepts could be one of the reasons EFL learners may not be able to develop their Intercultural Competence efficiently. The study found that all teachers seem to

lack a proper understanding of Intercultural Competence concepts, and this lack of knowledge can have a negative impact on their EFL classes. Similarly, Estaji and Rahimi (2018) found no significant differences in the participants' perceptions of ICC depending on their level of experience, education, and instruction. However, it was found that the participants' perceptions of ICC did have a role in their self-perceived instructional practices.

3.5. Teachers' Practices regarding Intercultural Competence

According to Holguin (2013), interculturality has been the focus of several studies. Still, a few concentrates on including an intercultural component (Byram 2002, component of Intercultural Competence) in a class different from the English one. Therefore, in the studies previously described, although teachers seem to be aware of the importance of Intercultural Competence, they do not often integrate in their practice (Atay, et al, 2009). According to these authors, it might be due to two reasons: first, teachers might not know how to incorporate culture into their classrooms. Second, they might not have the opportunity to combine cultural practices into their classes. Besides, in the study conducted by Young and Sachdev (2009), findings revealed that teachers seemed to be unable or unwilling to putting Intercultural Competence into practice mentioning some factors that cause their resistance: lack of learner interest, lack of curricular support, lack of a suitable textbook, and lack of ICC testing.

In another study performed by Chau and Trong (2019), the findings revealed that teachers rarely conduct intercultural activities in their practices. They suggested that educational management should be consistent with the progressive reform by synchronizing all curricular factors towards intercultural education. Teachers should be oriented with intercultural teaching pedagogy to design suitable activities to develop 'students' Intercultural Communicative



Competence. It can be proved in the study conducted by Eken (2015), where the findings revealed that the participants, which were five teachers at a University in Turkey, try to put their knowledge into practice to raise 'students' cultural awareness. Nevertheless, teachers do not have specific activities to use for this cause.

A similar study carried out by Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018) revealed that teachers were favorably disposed toward intercultural language teaching (ICLT) and thought that culture teaching is as important as language teaching. However, various 'teachers' responses in the interviews indicated some degree of uncertainty regarding the concept of ICLT, as they were not confident how to integrate language and culture or how to deal with challenges in the implementation of ICLT. These findings imply that as teachers' perceptions would guide the classroom practices, more attention needs to be devoted to the inclusion of Intercultural Competence topics in language teacher education courses to equip the teachers with requisite skills and expertise.

Although there has been plenty of research in the implementation and development of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms, and teachers' perceptions are positive, there is no attitudinal change in teachers who know about this topic. Therefore, this synthesis aims to find out the importance of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms and how this significance is shown in EFL teachers' practices.



CHAPTER IV

4. Methodology

According to Wyborn, C., Louder, E., Harrison, J., Montambault, J., Montana, J., Ryan, M. & Dellecker, E. (2018), a research synthesis is the integration of existing knowledge and research findings of an issue. Therefore, this exploratory research synthesis aims to extend the simplification and appropriateness of those discoveries and develop new information through integration.

A thorough search was performed to collect reliable sources about teachers' attitudes and perceptions in intercultural competence. The information was searched in online databases such as Scholar Google, ERIC, ACADEMIA, Taylor & Francis Online, Research Gate, and SAGE Journals. The inclusion criteria taken into account for the current literature research were the following. First, the articles were empirical studies, which according to Roth (2007), are defined as "the systematic process of deriving and analyzing data from direct or indirect observation" (p.354), so we got a better idea of teachers' experiences when referring to intercultural practices in an EFL classroom.

Second, the studies focused on teachers as the study participants because we wanted to analyze their perceptions. Third, merely studies based on intercultural competence were taken into account. Fourth, only articles whose participants belong to EFL classrooms were taken into account to obtain accurate results for future research in this field. Finally, according to Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018), over the years teachers are giving attention to promote the teaching of Intercultural Competence in their classrooms as an intercultural dimension of the language. For



that reason, only studies that have been published over the last 20 years were considered to analyze recent information about teachers' perceptions of intercultural competence in EFL classrooms because as Gomez (2012) mentioned “Intercultural Competence has become a central issue in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) over the last two decades.” (p.50)

The keywords that were used to look for these files were (a) intercultural competence, (b) teachers, (c) experiences, (d) perceptions, (e) English as a Foreign Language, (f) classroom, (g) results, (h) literature review, (i) beliefs, (j) practices.

On the other hand, some of the journals that were taken into account were the following; *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *Inonu University Journal Of the Faculty of Education*, *Multi-cultural education: From theory to practice*, *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, *International Journal of Instruction*, *Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand*, *REFlections*, *International Journal of Instruction*, *International Journal of Humanities*, *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, *ITL-International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *International Journal of Society, Culture & Language*, *Journal of Teaching and Education*, *Journal of language and linguistic studies*, *Onomázein: Revista de lingüística, filología y traducción de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*, and *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* to the development of the research synthesis.

Furthermore, there was no restriction related to the studies' design; thereby, qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies were taken into account. As a final point, if necessary, some sources were taken from research studies in which participants have any first language, as long as they meet the previously listed selection criteria. (Annex 1).



CHAPTER V

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Introduction

For the present synthesis, it is necessary to analyze the 20 studies that were selected. The studies were coded and analyzed under the following categories: publication year of the studies, teachers' beliefs towards Intercultural Competence, their practices and limitations regarding Intercultural Competence, and lastly, the components or elements teachers need to develop Intercultural Competence to answer the research questions. Besides, the findings were organized in tables accompanied by a description based on the analyzed studies and theories linked to the topic.

5.2. Publication year of the studies

In this section, we decided to analyze the studies' publication year because Intercultural Competence over the years in a like manner has been a usual topic of interest. According to Tajeddin and Rezanejad (2018) and Chau and Troung (2019), the second language education field has emphasized the promotion of Intercultural Competence more than ever throughout the last years to guarantee effective intercultural communications of language learners in future interactions.

Table 1

Publication year of the studies

| Author / Year | Year of Publication | N. of Studies | (%) |
|--|---------------------|---------------|-----|
| Sercu (2006); Atay, et al. (2009) | 2006 – 2009 | 2 | 10 |
| Young & Sachdev (2011); Cheng (2012); Clouet (2012); Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik (2013); Hongtao (2013); Tian (2013) | 2010 – 2014 | 6 | 30 |
| Demircioğlu & Çakır (2015); Eken (2015); Israelsson (2016); Valdivia & Gonzalez (2017); Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017); Genc (2018); Tajeddin & Rezanejad (2018); Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018); Bouslama & Benaissi (2018); Estaji & Rahimi (2018); Chau & Troung (2019); Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | 2015 – 2019 | 12 | 60 |

Note. N=20

Table 1 shows the year of publication of each study. Most studies are recent; their year of publication is between 2010 and 2019. Regarding the studies published before 2010, the number is minimal. This fact suggests that teachers have given attention and willingness to promote the teaching of Intercultural Competence as intercultural dimensions of language in their classrooms (Tajeddin & Rezanejad, 2018). Although Intercultural Competence has been proposed for over two decades and has shown positive results with language learners, it has not been widely adopted by foreign language teachers worldwide (Sercu, 2006). There has been more research on Intercultural Competence over the past ten years. The reason might be that nowadays, researchers in the educational field are giving more importance to the implementation of

Intercultural Competence in their classrooms. Demircioğlu and Çakır (2015) said that teachers' experiences with people from other cultures gave them the awareness of cultural diversity. Consequently, they began to incorporate some components of Intercultural Competence into their language teaching.

5.3. Teachers' Beliefs towards Intercultural Competence

Table 2

Teachers' Beliefs towards Intercultural Competence

| Author / Year (a) | Category | N. of Studies | (%) |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|-----|
| Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik (2013); Atay, et al. (2009); Eken (2015); Young & Sachdev (2011); Tian (2013); Bouslama & Benaissi (2018); Estaji & Rahimi (2018); Chau & Truong (2019); Demircioglu & Cakir (2015); Hongtao (2013); Tajjedin & Rezanejad (2018); Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018); Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017); Cheng (2012); Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | Positive Arguments | 15 | 75 |
| Sercu (2006); Clouet (2012); Valdivia & Gonzalez (2017) | Negative Arguments | 3 | 15 |
| Israelsson (2016); Genc (2018) | Neutral Arguments | 2 | 10 |

Note. N= 20

The present table intends to respond to the first research question about teachers' beliefs about Intercultural Competence in EFL teaching. It was divided into three groups. Regarding positive arguments, in 15 (75%) out of the 20 studies about teachers' beliefs, it was described how teachers perceive Intercultural Competence in their practices in a favorable way. For example, as Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) mentioned, Intercultural Competence can boost learners' confidence in using English for communication, enhance communication effectiveness, and make learners more aware of cultural differences. Similarly, the findings in different studies indicated that teachers considered Intercultural Competence an essential part of developing students' ability to be competent and successful users of a foreign language and use it for practical reasons and in real-life situations. (Young & Sachdev, 2015; Atay, et al., 2009; Demircioglu & Cakir, 2015; Hongtao, 2013; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; and Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018)

On the contrary, some studies revealed negative expectations of teachers towards Intercultural Competence. Sercu (2006) found that one group of teachers believed that it is impossible to integrate language and culture. They saw just adverse effects which are related to the reinforcement of pupils' already existing stereotypes. Moreover, teachers in another study prioritize linguistic competence above cultural and intercultural competence, as is seen in Clouet (2012). Finally, we added the last group as neutral bystanders of Intercultural Competence to emphasize that some teachers cannot give their positive or negative arguments because they do not have a clear idea of what Intercultural Competence is. Israelsson (2016) noted that teachers need to be familiar with the theory and available framework to examine and clarify this issue.

5.4. Teachers' Practices and Limitations regarding Intercultural Competence

After analyzing the above category, it can be seen that teachers' beliefs and actual practice are connected. Most of the studies where teachers presented positive or strong beliefs towards this issue showed that teachers' practices are better developed (Chau & Truong, 2019; Hongtao, 2013; Atay, et al., 2009; Young & Sachdev, 2011; and Boonmoh & Banjongjit, 2018). However, although most of the studies presented positive arguments, inside that group, some teachers do not implement related cultural practices in their classrooms (Eken, 2015; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; Estaji & Rahimi, 2018; Sercu, 2006; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Tajjedin & Rezanejad, 2018). Therefore, we included a category where we can first see what kind of practices teachers perform (Teachers' Cultural-related Practices) and second where we can see the reasons or factors limiting their application (Factors that Limit Teachers' Practices). The current category aims at responding to the overarching research question related to teachers' practices concerning Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms.

5.4.1 Teachers' Cultural-related Practices

Table 3

Teachers' cultural-related practices

| Author / Year (a) | Category | N. of Studies | (%) |
|--|---------------------|---------------|-----|
| Hongtao (2013); Atay, et al. (2009); Young & Sachdev (2011); Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018); Eken (2015); Israelsson (2016); Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017); Tian (2013); Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | Explicit Activities | 9 | 75 |

Demircioglu & Cakir (2015); Chau & Truong (2019); Cheng (2012)

| | | |
|------------|---|----|
| Implicit | | |
| | 3 | 25 |
| Activities | | |

Note. N=12

At first, there were 20 studies in total, but for table 3, only 12 studies were considered because the remaining eight do not reveal findings related to this category. In this table, we can see two different types of activities put into consideration, explicit and implicit activities. For implicit actions (75%), we can describe how students are directly connected to the foreign culture. Hence, in the study conducted by Demircioglu and Cakir (2015), teachers mentioned some intercultural practices that are considered to be implicit: celebrating cultural events or festivals of the foreign culture. Also, inviting people from other countries or nationalities and participating in international projects or competitions are the most frequently used ways to create opportunities for students to understand and experience different cultures, as Demircioglu and Cakir (2015) mentioned.

Only three studies (25%) focused on implicit activities, and it seems to be for one reason. Demircioglu and Cakir' (2015) study was conducted with participants belonging to a Baccalaureate World School whose purpose is to make all IB students learn a second language and skills necessary to live and work with others internationally. Therefore, the English course has an essential place in the IBDP curriculum.

Additionally, explicit activities that teachers used in their foreign language classrooms, as described by Chau and Truong (2019), are the ones that allow teachers to support language learning and are appropriate to the teaching contexts which are not rich in foreign and target cultures. Those activities include role-plays, the use of realia or authentic material, class

discussions about cultural differences in topics such as politics, economics, food, and clothing as mentioned in the studies of Chau & Truong, 2019; Demircioglu & Cakir, 2015; Young & Sachdev, 2011; and Atay, et al., 2009.

5.4.1.1. Focused Topics for Intercultural Classrooms

Table 4 was designed considering all the studies from the above category (Teachers' Cultural-related Practices) that focus on teachers' main topics for their explicit and implicit activities. This table intends to show the commonly used topics teachers apply in their classrooms towards Intercultural Competence.

Table 4

Topics for Intercultural Classrooms

| Author/Year | Topics | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------|----------|-----------|------|--------|
| | Music | Shopping | Festivals | Food | Others |
| Atay, et al. (2009) | | | X | | |
| Chau & Truong (2019) | | | X | X | |
| Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017) | X | | | | |
| Clouet (2012) | X | X | X | X | |
| Demircioglu & Çakır (2015) | | X | | X | |
| Eken (2015) | | X | | X | |

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|-----|
| Young & Sachdev (2011) | | x | | | x |
| Hongtao (2013) | | x | | | |
| Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018) | | | | | x |
| Israelsson (2016) | | | | | x |
| Tian (2013) | | x | | | x |
| Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | | | x | | |
| Total | | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 2 |

Note. N=12

a: Studies are counted in more than one category.

Table 4 shows the different topics that teachers covered in their practices. Most studies focused more on food, music, and shopping. For example, Clouet (2012) showed that teachers' knowledge of foreign culture only revolves around daily life and routines, music, food, drink, and youth culture. Teachers avoided topics that would be too controversial, particularly those that might offend learners from particular cultural, political, religious, or customs backgrounds (Young & Sachdev, 2011; and Demircioğlund & Çakır, 2015). Also, in the study made by Tian (2013), teachers considered that topics such as music and food could be considered as an essential addition to the symbolic dimension of Intercultural Competence. In that way, "they

prepare students for life by teaching good values, moral standards, and worldviews" (Tian, 2013, p.52).

5.4.2. Factors that Limit Teachers' Practices

Table 5

Factors that Limit Teachers' Practices

| Author/Year | Factors | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|--------------|------------------------------|
| | Lack of curricular support | Lack of students' interest | Lack of teachers' experience / knowledge | Lack of time | Lack of appropriate material |
| Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik (2013) | x | | x | | x |
| Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | | x | x | x | x |
| Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018) | x | x | x | x | x |
| Atay, et al. (2009) | x | | x | | x |
| Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017) | | x | | | x |
| Clouet (2012) | | | x | | x |
| Eken (2015) | | | | | x |



| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|----|---|----|
| Estaji & Rahimi (2018) | | | | | X |
| Genc (2018) | | X | | | X |
| Cheng (2012) | X | | X | | X |
| Israelsson (2016) | | X | X | X | X |
| Sercu (2006) | X | X | X | X | X |
| Valdivia & Gonzalez (2017) | | | X | | X |
| Tajjedin & Rezanejad (2018) | X | | X | X | X |
| Young & Sachdev (2011) | X | X | | | X |
| Demircioğlu & Çakır (2015) | X | | X | | |
| Hongtao | X | | X | X | |
| Chao and Trong | | | X | X | |
| Total | 9 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 15 |
| N=18 | | | | | |

Cheewasukthaworn and Suwanarak (2017) mentioned that teachers did not have a thorough understanding of how to effectively integrate Intercultural Competence into their teaching. It may be defined by some factors described in Table 5. First of all, it was necessary to

omit those studies that did not examine teachers' limitations towards the practices of Intercultural Competence. Second, to show the most common factors that limit teachers' practices in their classroom: lack of curricular support, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' experience or knowledge, lack of time, and lack of appropriate materials. However, this analysis focuses on these three limitations: lack of proper materials, lack of curricular support, and lack of teachers' experience or knowledge since they appeared to be the most frequently mentioned by different authors.

In the case of lack of appropriate materials, most studies, which are 15 out of 18, show that this is the primary and most common limitation teachers' face in their Intercultural Competence practices. Instructional materials do not clearly explain Intercultural Competence content. Boonmoh and Banjongjit (2018) say that materials (textbooks) need to include Intercultural Competence learning objectives to guarantee that Intercultural Competence is an essential component of education. Putting it differently, teachers expect a textbook with several cultural topics and understandable explanations. For this reason, Demircioğlu and Çakır (2015) claim that coursebook writers should design intercultural activities in each unit and support teachers with essential information in the teachers' coursebook.

Concerning the other limitation, lack of curricular support, Sercu (2006) mentioned that teachers feel that the curriculum has a strong focus on language teaching and does not contain cultural objectives. Also, teachers have to follow the national curriculum directions, so they do not have enough time to develop their classrooms' cultural aspects. Moreover, Bektaş-Çetinkaya and Çelik (2013) and Clouet (2012) agree that intercultural competence elements are not essential components of EFL curricula. As a result, "there is a big gap between the curriculum and teaching practices" (Hongtao, 2013, p. 111). Boonmoh and Banjongjit (2018) suggested a

solution that consisted of supporting teachers in Intercultural Competence concepts in the curriculum; thus, they would implement their practices in classrooms.

In regards to lack of teachers' experience or knowledge, Chau and Troung (2019) stated that although teachers have positive beliefs towards Intercultural Competence integration, still, they are not often put into their teaching practices intercultural activities. Also, teachers mentioned that they need enough information about how to incorporate Intercultural Competence in teaching English because they do not learn how to teach culture, so they turn to teach it in a traditional way (Israelsson , 2016). In other words, "teachers might be lacking the training focusing on the integration of culture into foreign education" (Atay, et al., 2009, p.132). According to Sercu (2006), language skills are most important for teachers, but it does not mean that they do not want to teach Intercultural Competence. It suggests that teachers are not yet clear about integrating language and culture in their teaching.

5.5. Components or Elements for Developing Intercultural Competence

This section was developed to answer the third research question, which is "to what extent does the development of Intercultural Competence enhance teachers' language teaching?" First, it is necessary to analyze the most relevant components teachers must develop to be interculturally competent. After that, it will be essential to explore how these components enhance teachers' teaching practices. Consequently, in the following table (Table 9), the elements that teachers need for developing Intercultural Competence are described. Byram (2002) proposed a model on this issue where it is included five main features that teachers need to gain success in EFL teaching; those are (1) intercultural attitudes, (2) knowledge, (3) skills of interpreting and relating, (4) skills of discovery and interaction, and (5) critical cultural

awareness. All of those components are essential for the development of Intercultural Competence in an EFL classroom. Nevertheless, most of the studies pointed out three as the most critical elements that can be grouped as follows; knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

Table 6

Elements of Intercultural Competence

| Author / Year | Elements | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|
| | Knowledge | Attitudes | Skills |
| Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak (2017) | X | | |
| Hongtao (2013) | X | X | X |
| Boonmoh & Banjongjit (2018) | X | X | X |
| Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik (2013) | X | X | X |
| Israelsson (2016) | X | X | |
| Eken (2015) | X | | |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|----|----|---|
| Atay, et al. (2009) | X | X | X |
| Valdivia & Gonzalez (2017) | | X | |
| Tian (2013) | X | X | X |
| Bousslama & Benaissi (2018) | X | X | |
| Shirazi & Shafiee (2017) | X | X | X |
| Chau and Troung (2019) | X | X | X |
| Clouet (2012) | | X | X |
| Estaji & Rahimi (2018) | X | | |
| Total | 12 | 11 | 8 |

Note. N= 14

By describing the components, we can see in table 6 how they influence teachers' teaching process. First, related to teachers' knowledge in some studies (Eken, 2015;

Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; and Atay, et al, 2009) teachers revealed to have general and limited knowledge of Intercultural Competence and other cultures. For instance, Bouslama and Benaissi (2018) concluded that teachers need to educate on Intercultural Competence and promote their understanding of IC to encourage their learners subsequently.

Second of all, in the study of Bouslama and Benaissi (2018), the importance of the second element lies specifically in attitudes of openness and tolerance. Hongtao (2013) mentioned some examples of teachers who support this point by saying that these attitudes of openness and tolerance can help students develop intercultural competence since they will tolerate the different perspectives of the world. In that way, they are not prejudiced because, as some teachers on Chau and Trong (2019) mentioned, "knowing about themselves and the otherness would help to avoid culture shocks in intercultural communication" (p. 447). Likewise, other groups of teachers in the same study expressed that fostering positive attitudes towards foreign cultures would facilitate language learning. Regarding the last element, skills, it refers to critical thinking and communication. They are essential for students' success in the foreign culture since they would be able to communicate with others who have a different culture. Therefore, they will be able to receive and interpret the message in which it was intended (Clouet, 2012).

In addition, as critical thinkers, learners would have the ability to differentiate cultures and how to interact with people with different cultural backgrounds (Boonmoh & Banjongjit, 2018, Hongtao, 2013; and Shirazi & Shafiee, 2017). All the elements of Intercultural Competence play an essential role for teachers and their teaching practices since they will allow students to be successful as foreign users of the English language. Eken (2015) supports this



point by saying that teachers are needed to be guides, role models, facilitators, and co-learners. As they attend in the learning-teaching process, students should also participate in this process active and thus develop Intercultural Competence.

After the studies' analysis, teachers, to a great extent, have positive or strong beliefs towards the importance of integrating Intercultural Competence in the EFL classrooms. Also, because some existing factors limit their putting into practice, teachers seem to develop more explicit activities than implicit ones. Finally, the development of Intercultural Competence enhances teachers' language teaching to a great extent because teachers act as guides of teaching and learning. Therefore, the development of students' Intercultural Competence depends on how teachers facilitate and influence learners' cultural and intercultural understanding of the world.



CHAPTER VI

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

This research synthesis aimed to analyze the importance of teachers' Intercultural Competence in the EFL classroom since this area, as mentioned by Young and Sachdev (2009), has focused on little empirical research. However, the importance of searching on this issue lies in the idea supported by Gomez. He (2012) stated that Intercultural Competence had become an essential part of English teaching as a foreign language over the past two decades. Moreover, recognizing the cultural dimension as a critical component of language studies has transformed the nature of the experience of teaching and learning languages to a great extent (Atay, et.al, 2009). Therefore, the development of Intercultural Competence is fundamental for foreign language education in this age of globalization (Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015).

Besides, teachers' beliefs towards Intercultural Competence were also taken into account due to the importance of Intercultural Competence to develop essential abilities to interact with people from other cultures (Atay, et al., 2009; Demircioglu & Cakir, 2015; Hongtao, 2013; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; and Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018). The analyzed studies have provided enough information about how researchers and teachers are giving more importance to the implementation of Intercultural Competence in their classrooms. This assumption is made because the examined studies in the literature review yielded that there are, to a great extent, positive results that suggest the efficacy of Intercultural Competence in EFL contexts. Therefore, applying Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms may generate positive results.

Regarding the development of Intercultural Competence in EFL classrooms, Byram (2002) proposed five main elements that are essential for it. In the analysis, we took three out of the five elements; skills, attitudes, and knowledge because 14 out of the 20 analyzed studies revealed that teachers perceived Intercultural Competence based on Byram's components of Intercultural Competence (2002). Moreover, teachers perceived Intercultural Competence as the ability to communicate with others' people cultures, the knowledge of their own culture and other cultures, the right attitude to interact with people of different cultures, and the skills such as listening, observing, and relating (Bouslama & Benaissi, 2018; Estaji, Masoomah & Rahimi, 2018; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Israelsson, 2016; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; and Clouet, 2012). Therefore, English language teachers have a responsibility to try and develop their students' Intercultural Competence because they act as guides of teaching and learning.

From the analysis, it can be seen that Intercultural Competence plays a vital role in the teaching of English as a foreign culture (Demircioglu & Cakir, 2015). However, in terms of its implementation in EFL classrooms, three main points could be considered. First, there are many studies where teachers did not carry out cultural-related practices (Eken, 2015; Bektaş-Çetinkaya & Çelik, 2013; Estaji & Rahimi, 2018; Sercu, 2006; Cheewasukthaworn & Suwanarak, 2017; Tajjedin & Rezanejad, 2018). Second, from the studies where teachers did include cultural-related practices, most of them were put into practice indirectly.

In other words, teachers use explicit activities such as role-plays and class discussions, adapting them to support language learning in a context that is not rich in foreign and target cultures (Chau and Truong, 2019). Finally, the practices teachers included in their classroom were focused on social aspects of daily life such as food, clothes, and shopping (Clouet, 2012)

living apart topics that can be controversial and might offend people from a particular cultural, political, religious, or custom background (Young & Sachdev, 2011; and Demircioglund & Çakır, 2015).

Considering the information above, although teachers in most of the studies presented to have positive beliefs about Intercultural Competence and the benefits for language teaching, they believe it is challenging to integrate Intercultural Competence in their own classes (Atay et. al., 2009). Furthermore, it can be assumed that teachers' practices are limited because of some factors such as lack of authentic material, lack of curricular support, lack of students' interest, lack of teachers' experience, and lack of time.

6.2. Recommendations

Based on the positive perceptions' teachers have expressed towards Intercultural Competence, we recommend to apply in an EFL classroom. If it is used in foreign contexts, students and teachers will get familiarized with this concept. Also, Intercultural Competence could be applied in ESL contexts since it is likely to have more cultural variety either for students and teachers. Moreover, for EFL teachers to analyze students' needs or background to implement or integrate Intercultural Competence into their learning, they need training on Intercultural Competence. Moreover, because of the growth in recognition of Intercultural Competence as an essential part of an EFL classroom, teachers need to know and develop the skills necessary to deal with this issue.

It is also relevant to highlight the importance of further investigation on Intercultural Competence, especially research that looks to answer questions such as how teachers should face the challenges presented in their EFL classrooms when it comes to Intercultural



Competence. Moreover, based on teachers' positive beliefs towards Intercultural Competence, but its limited implementation in their classes. It is recommended that future investigations would center on finding the reasons that cause this problem to help teachers in the searching of methodologies that allow them to implement cultural-content activities in their classes as a way of assisting the students to be interculturally competent.

Finally, we suggest further research exploring students' perception of Intercultural Competence to observe how they deal with interculturality in a multi-cultural environment.

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ANNEX 1

Preliminary List of Studies for Analysis

- Atay, D., Kurt, G., Çamlıbel, Z., Ersin, P., & Kaslioglu, O. (2009). The Role of Intercultural Competence in Foreign Language Teaching. *Inonu University Journal Of the Faculty of Education* 10(3), p. 123-135.
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